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EXHIBIT 2
DATE 1/9/09
HB 106

January 9th, 2009

TO: Members of the House Human Services Committee

FROM: Andy Heiman, for AARP Montana and James and Hope Martin

RE: Support of HB 72 – Clarify Duration of Caretaker Relative Authorization Affidavit

Madame Chair and Members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is James Martin and I am an active part of AARP Montana's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program. Just so you know, there are over 6,000 grandparents raising grandchildren in this state.

I am raising five of my own grandchildren so I am an expert in the amount of time and energy it takes to both raise grandchildren and comply with state law regarding their care. It took three years to go through the procedure to adopt my youngest two. I have dealt with my grandchildren being simply dropped off at my house, and I have assumed responsibility for their schooling. This bill will do a small part in helping other caretaker relatives of all kinds provide the best support for their loved ones' education.

There are many, many steps to formally acquiring custody of a grandchild—and it takes a long time. During the time between when they are dropped off at my house and finally formally adopted, I had permission to help them go through school as easily as possible. Under the current law, becoming their formal caretaker is difficult and must be done more than once a school year. This bill will make it possible to do the paper work just once a school year, rather than having to fill out new papers when the old ones ran out which added one more step in an incredibly complicated process.

Because this bill is a step towards making it easier for legitimate caretaker relatives to attend to their child's education, I join AARP Montana in supporting this House Bill 72. Small steps that make it easier to be a grandparent raising a grandchild are still a big help. Thank you for your consideration.

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